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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 NSAE-00

NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 AID-20 IO-11

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 15381

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: OPPOSITION MOVES TOWARD PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS

REF: SAIGON 15274

1. SUMMARY: A WIDE VARIETY OF POLITICAL FIGURES HAS TOLD US IN THE LAST TWO DAYS THAT VICE PRESIDENT KY IS PROMOTING A CAMPAIGN OF JOINT DISTURBANCES TO PROTEST THE OCTOBER 3 REFERENDUM WHICH WILL COMMENCE SEPTEMBER 25 AND WILL INCLUDE AN QUANG BUDDHISTS AND NORTHERN CATHOLIC ELEMENTS IN ADDITION TO RADICAL STUDENTS AND VETERANS. THEY EMPHASIZE PRESIDENT THIEU'S POLITICAL ISOLATION AND MANY AGREE ON AN ARTICLE 56 SOLUTION TO CRISIS (I.E. RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT THIEU WITH ASSUMPTION OF POWERS BY CHAIRMAN OF UPPER HOUSE AND NEW ELECTIONS WITHIN THREE MONTHS). OPPOSITIONISTS CLAIM THEIU WILL BE FORCED OUT OF OFFICE SOON AFTER THE ELECTION. (2) WHEREAS MODERATES SUGGEST THE PRESIDENT WILL NEED TO TAKE ACTION FOLLOWING HIS REELECTION TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION AND RECOUP HIS PRESTIGE. END SUMMARY

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2. CONVERSATIONS WITH A VARIETY OF KNOWLEGEABLE VIETNAMESE OVER THE LAST TWO DAYS HAVE INDICATED A CONSENSUS THAT CLOSELY COORDINATED STREET DISTURBANCES ORGANIZED BY VICE PRESIDENT KY OPPOSING THE OCTOBER 3 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WILL BEGIN SEPTEMBER 25.

3. FORMER SENATOR PHAM NAM SACH, MEMBER OF KY'S BRAIN TRUST, HAS TOLD US THE DISTURBANCES WOULD TAKE PLACE NOT ONLY IN SAIGON BUT ALSO IN HUE, DANANG, CAN THO AND ELSEWHERE. SACH STATED THAT THE COMMON OBJECTIVE IS REORGANIZATION OF THE ELECTION UNDER ARTICLE 56 OF THE CONSTITUTION, CLAIMED THE OPPOSITION IS NOW UNITED, AND PREDICTED THIEU'S DOWNFALL WITHIN THREE MONTHS IF HE DOES NOT COMPROMISE.

4. IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT VETERANS AND STUDENTS WILL SPEARHEAD THE DEMONSTRATIONS, AND AN IMPORTANT QUESTION IS THE EXTENT OF AN QUANG BUDDHIST SUPPORT. SACH CLAIMED THAT THEY WOULD PROBABLY PARTICIPATE, REPEATING CLAIMS BY KY AIDE LE VAN THAI (REFTEL) THAT OTHER BONZES HAVE NEUTRALIZED A DEAL BETWEEN THICH THIEN MINH AND PRESIDENT THIEU. PERHAPS MORE RELIABLE WAS THE INDICATION BY THE VENERABLE THICH NHAT THIEN, A WELL INFORMED MIDDLE-LEVEL AN QUANG BONZE, THAT "AN QUANG HAS DECIDED TO TAKE ENERGETIC ACTION IN THE VERY, VERY NEAR FUTURE TO OPPOSE THE OCTOBER 3 REFERENDUM." THIEN STATED THAT AN QUANG WISHES TO AVOID DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY VIOLENCE AND THUS ITSELF WILL NOT LEAD DISORDERS BUT WILL ONLY PARTICIPATE IN COMMON PROTESTS WITH OTHER GROUPS.

5. THE EXTENT TO WHICH GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH MIGHT SUPPORT THE MOVE IS NOT YET CLEAR. HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATE AND FORMER VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN NGOC THO EXPRESSED UNCERTAINTY TO US ON WHETHER GENERAL MINH WOULD PARTICIPATE IN JOINT PROTESTS. ASSERTING THAT KY AND MINH ARE "CONSULTING TOGETHER," THO SHARPLY DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN MINH'S DESIRE FOR "SMOOTH, NONVIOLENT PROTEST" AND KY'S PREFERENCE FOR DIRECT MEASURES, AND PREDICTED VAGUELY THAT MINH WOULD INITIATE "PARALLEL BUT INDEPENDENT" ACTION.

6. CONCERN IS ALSO EXPRESSED BY CATHOLIC SOURCES. DR. NGUYEN VAN THO, PROMINENT CATHOLIC CONVERSATIVE, TOLD

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US HE AND MOST OTHER CATHOLICS DESIRE REORGANIZATION OF THE ELECTION BUT, CONTRARY TO MOST OTHER CONTACTS, THO EXPRESSED STRONG FEAR THAT THE SITUATION WOULD "RUN WILD" UNLESS PRESIDENT THIEU HIMSELF PRESIDES OVER NEW ELECTION. THO BELIEVED VIOLENT DISTURBANCES WITH NORTHERN CATHOLIC PARTICIPATION ARE POSSIBLE UNLESS THE ELECTION IS POSTPONED AND NOTED THAT "ONLY GENERALS AND SOME CIVIL SERVANTS" SUPPORT PRESIDENT THIEU'S DECISION TO PROCEED WITH THE REFERENDUM. THO COMMENTED THAT SENATORS DANG VAN SUNG, HUYNH VAN CAO ("THIEU'S CLOEST POLITICAL ALLY"), SENATE CHAIRMAN NGUYEN VAN HUYEN, AND SAIGON ARCHBISHOP NGUYEN VAN BINH, ALL NOW OPPOSE THE REFERENDUM. PROFESSOR TRUONG CONG CUU, CHAIRMAN OF THE CATHOLIC-BASED, NEO-CAN LAO NHAN XA PARTY, PERSONALLY DEPLORED THE OCTOBER 3 REFERENDUM BUT SAID THE NHAN XA WOULD REMAIN CALM AND ASSERTED THAT HIS PARTY WOULD SUPPORT PRESIDENT THIEU AGAINST MINH AND KY IN REORGANIZED ELECTIONS. AN AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT TOLD US THAT SAIGON ARCHBISHOP BINH HAD EXPRESSED DEEP CONCERN SEPTEMBER 24 OVER THE PROSPECTS OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS, AND HAD SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE IS

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UPW-01 SAL-02 RSR-01 /105 W
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R 241245Z SEP 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0371
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 15381

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COUNSELING RESTRAINT HE EXPECTS THAT NORTHERN AND SOME SOUTHERN CATHOLICS MIGHT PARTICIPATE.

7. THIEU OPPONENTS SUCH AS SENATOR SACH AND NGUYEN NGOC THO PREDICT THAT PRESIDENT THIEU WILL SOMEHOW BE BROUGHT DOWN SOON AFTER THE ELECTION UNLESS THE ELECTIONS ARE REORGANIZED. ON THE OTHER HAND, INDIVIDUALS MORE FAVORABLE TO THIEU URGED THAT THIEU TAKE ACTION TO IMPROVE HIS POSITION ONCE HE HAS BEEN REELECTED. PROFESSOR NGUYEN VAN BONG, CHAIRMAN OF THE MODERATE PROGRESSIVE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, WHO IS ONE OF THE FEW PERSONS WHO FELT THIEU SHOULD GO AHEAD WITH THE ELECTION, ASSERTED THAT IT WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT FOR THIEU TO CHANGE HIS CABINET AND HIS POLICY AFTER THE ELECTION IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION. SIMILARLY, NGUYEN VAN THO SUGGESTED THAT IF HE

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SURVIVED THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS THIEU SHOULD ESTABLISH A NATIONALIST POLITICAL PARTY AND "DEMILITARIZE HIS GOVERNMENT."

8. COMMENT: FOREGOING CONVERSATIONS ARE REPORTED AS INDICATION OF CURRENT REACTIONS IN POLITICAL CIRCLES TO REFERENDUM AND EXPECTED PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS THIS WEEKEND. FURTHER DETAILS ON PLANS FOR LATTER ARE BEING GIVEN IN OTHER CHANNELS. BUNKER

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